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Memorial address

by

Hon. Frank J. Cannon

of

Utah

upon the Life and Character

of

Hon. Joseph H. Earle.

1898

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MEMORIAL ADDRESS

BY

HON. FRANK J. CANNON,

OF UTAH,

UPON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

HON. JOSEPH H. EARLE

(Late a Senator from the State of South Carolina),

DELIVERED IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

MARCH 29, 1898.

WASHINGTON.
1898.

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Mr. W. A. Smith

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MEMORIAL ADDRESS ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF HON. JOSEPH H. EARLE.

Mr. CANNON. Mr. President, JOSEPH H. EARLE, the soldier, the Senator, has answered the last roll call of this world. If the bravery of his career on earth is any assurance of the composure with which he will confront the judgment seat, we may well believe that he will stand there serene in the strength which knows no faltering, willing to receive the appointed decree for all the thoughts and all the words and all the deeds which marked his little day on earth. It is a splendid hope that the grandest quality of the human soul—steadfastness—can not be lost in the transition from this life of death to the deathless life.

Greater than the affection which prompts us to devote this hour to an expression of eulogy for the citizen departed, for the friend gone to the other Mansion, for the battle-nerved arm quieted in the coffin, for the honest voice stilled in the soft nighttime of the grave, is the duty upon us to pause in this solemn instant in our country's career and contemplate the brevity of mundane experience and the speeding toward us all of that sunset hour when earthly hope and earthly life are enveloped in the shadows. The sense of death hallows the judgment of men and sanctifies the purpose of nations.

Let us in this view of our larger duty devote to this memorial service the time which belongs to the country. JOSEPH H. EARLE and his fellow-Senators met in this official sphere as birds meet at sea, giving but the signal of a fluttered wing as they drive along through swirling tempests, and scarcely pausing to turn an eye to watch each other's flight beyond opposed horizons. I knew this departed one but briefly; and yet admiringly, for he was a soldier-gentleman, so considerate of all the high requirements of social and official intercourse that every contact with him seemed but to more endear him to his fellows. I knew him best as the

reconciled representative of a reconciled people—as one who felt that the Cause for which he had offered his life was won when it was lost.

No words from human lips can add to the dignity of that epitaph which his own career has written: JOSEPH H. EARLE, the orphaned lad, offering his heart's best blood to the State he loved; JOSEPH H. EARLE, the United States Senator, offering his soul's best thought to the people of the country which he loved more. That which we can say must be for the comfort of remaining humanity and not to bless him. It is an instructive thought that not all the words which earthly pens can trace, nor all the sentiments which human lips can utter, can add one jot to or take one tittle from the character which was the formation of his 50 years as we count earthly time.

He was a man. And in this one man was folded all the universe, with its dark abysms of eternal silence, its immeasurable spaces filled with the mysteries of unknowing and unknown; and with all its lighted worlds of heavenly harmony, its precessional march of infinite power, and its sublimer mystery of some time knowing all as we are known.

As the breathing flower, as the wind-stirred leaf, as the upspringing grass blade contains within its tiny self the problem of progression and its solving, and as it has its individual and impregnable identity amidst all its fellows; so man, every man, bears within himself, in the illumination of his soul, the possibility of all knowledge, all virtue, all law by which the universe is and is governed, all processes by which the worlds are framed, and, in its darker chambers, all the possibilities of woe and destruction and infinite gloom—and he has his own individuality, in which, through all the eternity, there can not come the unholy intrusion of any other essence.

This order is not complex; it is of all things most plain—that man of his Creator born, the chief of all things created, is of the creative power an eternal part. From him, in earthly life, spring the majesty of nations and the downfall of dynasties. If we could know of that hidden thing, the first man, and could lay bare to finite knowledge the wonder of his possibilities, we would see that in him was the germ of all that was to be—the

song of love and the shriek of hate; the whisper of peace and the trump of war; the crucifixion and the crucified; the home of hope where innocence with instinct supernatural calls all things good because they are, and because they are of God, and the slaughter pen of infamy, where innocence perishes, doubting of mercy because it seems to be withheld, and doubting of mercy's God because He does not seem to speak; the palace and the hovel; the plenty and content which flow from wisdom, and the want and degradation which come of laws denied; the liberty-crowned domes beneath which freemen speak for freemen, and the dungeons of the secret tyranny; the fight of savage men to overcome a savage earth; the triumph of that intellect which, in the evolution of this life, has grown too large for the limitations of our poor measure of time and space; the unions and the revolutions; the wandering stars, gathered into one field of blue and made the flag of a consecrated people, inspired with a holy purpose to redeem the world for its exaltation as a heavenly home. All good, all evil, are his. It is the whisper of his own immortality that asks him on to deathless deeds; it is the clog of his own earthliness that holds him in the mire of things that die in their doing. As immortality step by step conquers the earthliness, the man of the now is rising into realms of greater light, and upon him is dawning the day of reflected infinite knowledge that peace and order are the law of that universe of which he holds the essence. To this end he is marching, led on by inspiration, led on by that eternal impulsion which makes the generations go from good things unto better; until—surmounting all—from him, in eternal life, springs the majesty of worlds, peopled and glorious. In every evolution which has marked his passage he can see, if he will, the unassailable certainty of that eternal time for him. Earthly evolution is but the type of spiritual evolution. It is the monition of a lesson which we sometimes try to forget, but which comes to us in the silent watches of the night, in the hour of loneliness at sea, by the bedside of friends departing, and, more sacredly and certainly than all, in the hope to meet again the friends already gone.

This life, as a part of the eternity to which it belongs, is not even as a speck of cosmic dust to the infinite space to which it reddens

under the crimson sun. There is a future, as there was a past. As the past is lost to our remembrance lest we lose our energy by retrospection, so the future is mercifully hidden from us lest we rush from life with heedless haste or feel a saddened discontent with earth. But that it is, and that it is forever, as it was forever, all the best moments of man bear witness.

No human soul is satisfied with the hopeless horror of oblivion. To have emerged from nothingness, to have gasped this earthly air for the fretting instant of a fretted human life, and then to have plunged into nothingness is to have been of a humanity damned from birth to death with causeless, useless struggle in a wretched world of nothingness. The grave is not extinction; it is the door of home; it is God's portal through which we pass from this little light of life to the greater light of a better life. Just so surely as we live to die, just so surely do we only die to live.

Doubt of eternal life would be a self-inflicted cruelty, if there were room for doubt. But this is true: It is either oblivion before we were, nothingness now, and oblivion after we are, or it is life forever. Of these two, every man from whom a dearer than himself has passed away will, in the holiest chamber of his thought, beneath the stony front which he presents to all the world, hold fast the hope which is knowledge, that it is life forever.

Earthly science has its vast domain, in which it triumphs and subdues; but beyond the measure of its widening achievements, and beyond the bounded realm of certainty, abides the unbounded realm of holy faith. Passing all comfort that mortality can give—balm to the wounded heart, sustenance to the poverty stricken, justice to the oppressed, benediction to the orphaned and the widowed and all who mourn, is the prophetic vision which stands for us through the ages:

Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

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